



After the public comment period, DTSC will evaluate all of the submitted comments. If the RAW is approved, installation of the mitigation system will occur in conjunction with construction of the School addition. Installation of the mitigation system will begin following excavation and grading for school construction. A Removal Action Completion Report will be prepared and submitted to DTSC for review and approval upon completion of the construction activities. After a period of operations and maintenance under DTSC supervision, the ongoing performance of the mitigation system will be monitored as part of the LAUSD existing school safety program.

Commonwealth Elementary School Proposed Addition Project



PROPOSED METHANE MITIGATION

DTSC is one of six Boards and Departments within the California Environmental Protection Agency. The Department's mission is to restore, protect and enhance the environment, to ensure public health, environmental quality and economic vitality, by regulating hazardous waste, conducting and overseeing cleanups, and developing and promoting pollution prevention.

State of California



California Environmental Protection Agency



Introduction

This fact sheet describes an environmental investigation and proposed hazardous substance mitigation activities for a school addition project planned for your neighborhood. The Commonwealth Elementary School Proposed Addition Project Site is comprised of the northern one-acre portion of the current school located at 215 South Commonwealth Avenue in Los Angeles. The site mitigation will be conducted by the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) under the oversight of the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC).

The addition is being proposed to ease school overcrowding by adding seats for 414 students. As part of its planning process, the LAUSD conducted environmental investigations at the Proposed Addition Site under the oversight of the DTSC, a department of the California Environmental Protection Agency. The site investigations detected naturally occurring concentrations of methane from crude oil materials. The methane levels were found to pose a very low-level potential physical hazard. However, as a result of the investigation findings, DTSC is proposing further action to

COMMUNITY MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

Commonwealth Elementary School
Multi-Purpose Room
215 S. Commonwealth Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90004
May 9, 2002
9:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m.

In conjunction with the Commonwealth Elementary School Parents Advisory Council, DTSC will conduct a community meeting to provide you with information about the proposed Removal Action Workplan and findings of the environmental investigations for this proposed school addition site.

DTSC encourages you to take an active interest in the issues affecting the hazardous substance cleanup activities at this school site by attending this meeting and submitting your comments on the removal action plan. Spanish and Korean interpreters will be provided at the meeting.

Public Comment Period

You can review and comment on the draft Removal Action Workplan for the Commonwealth Elementary School Proposed Addition Site during a 30-day public comment period from:

May 8, 2002 to June 6, 2002

Written comments on the draft Removal Action Workplan must be postmarked by June 6, 2002. A comment form and postage paid envelope are provided for your convenience.

The complete RAW report and other related project documents are available at the local Information Repositories listed on page 4.

Project documents are available for public review at the following locations:

Felipe De Neve Branch Library

2820 W. 6th Street,
Los Angeles, CA 90057
Phone: (213) 384-7676
Monday and Thursday 12:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Tuesday and Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday and Friday 12:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Closed Sunday

Department of Toxic Substances Control

Regional Records Office
1011 N. Grandview Avenue
Glendale, CA 91201
Contact: Jone Barrio
Phone: (818) 551-2886
Hours: Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Los Angeles Unified School District

Office of Communications
450 North Grand Avenue, Room H-174
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Contact: Susie Solano
Phone: (213) 625-6766
Hours: Monday-Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Los Angeles Unified School District

Office of Environmental Health and Safety
355 South Grand Avenue, Sixth Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90071
Contact: Tom Watson
Phone: (213) 633-8242
Hours: Monday-Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Commonwealth Elementary School

Administrative Office
215 S. Commonwealth Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90004
(213) 384-2546

The energy challenge facing California is real. Every Californian needs to take immediate action to reduce energy consumption. For a list of simple ways you can reduce demand and cut your energy costs, see our website at www.dtsc.ca.gov.

remediate methane from the site. DTSC agreed that methane mitigation should be conducted to eliminate the potential risk associated with unforeseen site condition changes that could possibly lead to methane levels of concern. Once the methane mitigation system is installed, the potential risk associated with this compound will be eliminated and the site will be considered safe for students and faculty.

LAUSD has prepared a draft Removal Action Workplan for the mitigation of the contaminated soil in response to the findings of the environmental investigations. The DTSC is accepting comments on the proposed removal action during the 30-day public comment period starting May 8, 2002.

Site Description

The Proposed Addition Site is bordered by multi-family residences to the north, Commonwealth Avenue to the east, Virgil Avenue to the west, and the existing Commonwealth Avenue Elementary School to the south. The site is currently developed with a parking lot, playground area, and three existing school buildings. It has historically been occupied by a portion of the school and residential dwellings. The Proposed Addition will include new classrooms, a play area, and an underground parking structure. The new classrooms and play area will be set above the underground parking structure.

Site Investigation

Site investigation activities, including soil and soil gas sampling, were conducted as part of a Preliminary Environmental Assessment (PEA) in August, September, and October 2001. Further soil sampling was conducted as part of a Focused Soil Investigation in February 2002. The investigation was conducted to test for the potential elevated levels of methane, metals, volatile organic compounds, or petroleum hydrocarbons. The results of the investigation were summarized in the final PEA Report, which was approved by DTSC in March 2002.

Environmental Investigation Results

Methane was found in three samples at elevated

concentrations at three locations at a depth of 15 feet below ground. All three locations were in the lower parking area. Although elevated, the levels of methane were still below typical levels of concern. The proposed Removal Action will integrate engineering design features into the construction plan to mitigate the potential for methane mitigation into enclosed spaces. In addition, LAUSD has monitored the existing Commonwealth Elementary School building spaces for methane quarterly since December 2000. To date no elevated levels of methane have been detected.

Removal Action Workplan (RAW) Scope

The draft Removal Action Workplan, prepared in March 2002, identifies and screens possible removal action/mitigation alternatives. Removal action/mitigation alternatives were screened and evaluated on the basis of their effectiveness, feasibility, and cost. Screening of several mitigation techniques using these criteria was conducted to select mitigative actions for further evaluation. Based on this screening, three possible alternatives were selected for further evaluation:

- Alternative 1 –No Action
- Alternative 2 –Passive/Enhanced Ventilation and Barriers
- Alternative 3 –Active Ventilation and Barriers

Based on the removal action selection process, Alternative 2, Passive/Enhanced Ventilation and Barriers, has been selected as the preferred mitigative alternative for mitigating the methane in soil at the site. This alternative was selected because it was determined to be effective, feasible, and cost effective. In addition, it will result in the virtual elimination of physical dangers, if any, associated with the potential mobility and concentration of methane at the site. It can be implemented within the required time frame for planned school construction and is protective of public health and the environment.

Proposed Mitigation Activities

The mitigation system is to be installed during

construction of the proposed school addition. Inspection and oversight of the mitigation system installation will be conducted by the DTSC. The mitigation system combines the use of methane barriers, passive subfloor venting, and enhanced ventilation of the parking structure. The methane barriers will consist of:

- 1) A horizontal barrier of 60-millimeter high density polyethylene membrane, which is impermeable to methane, and
- 2) A vertical high density polyethylene membrane attached to vertical retaining walls of the parking structure to prevent lateral migration of methane.

The passive venting system under the floor of the parking structure consists of a series of shallow, gravel-filled trenches, with a slotted, plastic gas collection pipe embedded in the trench. The collection pipes are networked together and vented safely to the atmosphere. The purpose of the vent system is to prevent methane pressure buildup in the underlying soil. The enhanced ventilation in the parking garage includes installing additional small fans at four ground floor utility rooms for added protection.

Utility trench dams (gas barriers within the

trenches containing utility lines) will also be installed. These will prevent methane that may have accumulated in soil outside the building border from migrating into the soils below the building. Electrical conduit seals (material inserted into hollow electrical conduit piping) will be installed at the point where the conduit enters the structure to block any methane that might infiltrate the piping in the ground.

Each of these mitigation items will be subject to rigorous construction quality assurance during installation. This will entail inspection of ground preparation, vent pipe placement, bedding and backfill, membrane placement and seams, utility dams and seals prior to covering. In addition, the membrane seams will be pressure-tested and the entire membrane smoke tested to insure there are no leaks. Upon completion of the installation, a licensed engineer experienced in methane mitigation will certify that construction has met the design plans and specifications. In addition, an Operation and Maintenance Plan will specify regular monitoring and inspections to be performed to ensure the mitigation system is functioning properly.

Notice of Exemption (NOE)

DTSC has prepared a draft NOE for this project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This project is considered exempt since DTSC has found no evidence that the mitigation will have a significant negative effect on the environment.

What Happens Next?

Prior to making a final decision on the Commonwealth Elementary School Proposed Addition Project Draft Removal Action Workplan, DTSC will receive comments during the 30-day public comment period, which begins on May 8, 2002. Comments may be submitted in writing to: Ms. Laura Zaremba, Project Manager, Department of Toxic Substances Control, 1011 North Grandview Avenue, Glendale, California 91201. Comments must be postmarked by June 6, 2002.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you have questions regarding the DTSC investigation or the proposed removal action please contact:

Treva Miller, DTSC Public Participation Specialist, (818) 551-2846
Laura Zaremba, DTSC Project Manager, (818) 551-2183
Jeanne Garcia, Media Contact, (818) 551-2176

Si desea información en español, comuníquese con: Sr. Eloy Florez, Especialista en Participación Pública de el DTSC, al (818) 551-2875

LAUSD Contact:

Tom Watson, Project Manager, LAUSD Office of Environmental Health and Safety, (213) 633-8242
For information related the school addition design and construction please call: Marina Perez, LAUSD Community Outreach Office, at (213) 633-3886.

Si desea información en español, comuníquese con: Sra. Marina Perez, Oficina de Alcance a la Comunidad del LAUSD (LAUSD Community Outreach Office), al (213) 633-3886 o por correo electrónico: mperez@laschools.org